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MULTI-SECTIONAL NOVELTY DEVICE SEAT CUSHION

Background Of The Invention

Field Of The Invention

5 The present invention relates generally to a seat cushion and, more particularly, relates to a multi-sectional device for use as both a novelty device and a seat cushion.

Description Of The Related Art

10 Spectators of events at large outdoor venues such as stadiums often show their enthusiastic support for performers or athletes using novelty devices. These fans may use signs, banners, noisemakers, costumes, pom-poms, or novelty devices such as foam hands or mascots to show their enthusiasm, draw attention to themselves or others, or to rally fellow supporters of a performer or athlete to a common cause. In a similar manner, fans often express their support along with fellow fans in larger, coordinated cheers, such as “the wave,” the “tomahawk chop” for Atlanta Braves® fans, or the “chomp” for San Jose Sharks® fans, using
15 novelty devices.

Conventional novelty devices used by these fans, however, are often designed solely for use as a novelty device, and may be large or bulky. As such, these novelty devices are both awkward to carry and difficult to store when not in use as a novelty device, given the often-cramped conditions of a spectator.
20 Furthermore, in the case of a simple one-piece novelty device such as a foam hand or tomahawk, a fan is limited in their use of the novelty device, and consequently limited in their participation of the event, to merely waving or displaying the novelty device to others. Moreover, in times of increased security, stadium or arena operators may be increasingly reluctant to allow patrons into a

stadium with conventional novelty devices given the greater diligence required to screen backpacks, purses or other personal items which are required to carry these devices.

5 Once a fan has reached their designated seat with a conventional novelty device, they are presented with a new set of challenges. Outdoor venues often have uncomfortable bench-style seating, or cramped folding chairs which are not conducive to contented, long-term spectating. Specifically, these seats are often constructed of hard plastic or metal, frequently causing neck, back, or lower extremity pain for their users. Furthermore, the unpadded design of these seats
10 and materials used provide minimal thermal protection to a spectator who may be sitting on a stadium-style seat during a particularly cold day.

Conventional portable stadium seat cushions, which are generally square-shaped and sized to fit a standard stadium seat, are used to alleviate these discomforts, but are also not useful for other purposes. In this regard,
15 conventional seat cushions are yet another bulky item for a fan to carry to an outdoor arena, in addition to novelty devices, outdoor clothing or blankets, portable televisions, noisemakers, radios, cellular telephone devices, food and beverages, cameras, flashlights, et cetera. Moreover, conventional seat cushions often go unused when a fan is standing on their feet watching the game intently,
20 or participating in an activity such as cheering.

Accordingly, it is desirable to provide for a device which may be used as a novelty device to overcome the drawbacks of conventional novelty devices. Additionally, it is also desirable to provide for a novelty device which may also be used as a seat cushion when not in use as a novelty device.

25 SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention addresses the foregoing deficiencies of the prior art by providing a device for use by spectators of an event as both a novelty device and a seat cushion, and a method for manufacturing the same. Using an attaching mechanism, the novelty device seat cushion can be quickly and easily configured

by a spectator as either a novelty device or a seat cushion, and be conveniently carried to and from an event as one unit with a built-in carrying handle, and stored on a standard sized stadium seat or other seating surface at an athletic, musical or other event.

5 According to one aspect of the invention, a multi-sectional novelty device seat cushion includes a plurality of seat cushion sections, including at least a first seat cushion section and a second seat cushion section, and an attaching mechanism. The first seat cushion section includes a non-linear first border, and the second seat cushion section includes a non-linear second border, where the
10 first border and the second border tessellate. The attaching medium is affixed to the first seat cushion section at the first border.

 According to an additional aspect of the invention, a method of manufacturing a multi-sectional novelty device seat cushion includes the steps of forming a plurality of seat cushion sections, including at least a first seat cushion
15 section and a second seat cushion section, and affixing an attaching medium to a non-linear first border of the first seat cushion section. The first border of the first seat cushion section tessellates with a non-linear second border of the second seat cushion section.

 The present invention significantly improves the enjoyment of an event
20 spectator by placing two important elements of the spectating experience, the multi-sectional novelty device and the seat cushion, into a convenient and easy-to-carry single-unit design.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

 Figure 1 is a depiction of an outward appearance of the present invention
25 for use as both a novelty device and a seat cushion;

 Figure 2 is an depiction of an outward appearance of the present invention, in an alternate configuration;

 Figure 3 is a depiction of an outward appearance of the present invention, in an additional alternate configuration; and

Figure 4 is a flowchart depicting a method of manufacturing a multi-sectional novelty device seat cushion, in accordance with an additional aspect of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

5 The present invention is directed to a multi-sectional novelty device seat cushion, including a plurality of seat cushion sections, including at least a first seat cushion section and a second seat cushion section, and an attaching mechanism. The first seat cushion section includes a non-linear first border, and the second seat cushion section includes a non-linear second border, where the
10 first border and the second border tessellate. The attaching medium is affixed to the first seat cushion section at the first border.

 Figure 1 is a depiction of an outward appearance of a multi-sectional novelty device seat cushion in accordance with the present invention. Specifically, multi-sectional novelty device seat cushion 100 includes first seat
15 cushion section 101 and second seat cushion section 102. For the comfort of the user, first seat cushion section 101 and second seat cushion section 102 are constructed of a material such as flexible polyurethane foam (FPF), which provides desirable softness and pliability characteristics, while at the same time providing thermal insulation and stability for a seated user.

20 The manufacture of cushioning material, including FPF, is well known in the art. See, for example, *Information About FPF For Cushioning Applications*, Polyurethane Foam Association, at <http://www.pfa.org> (last visited January 14, 2004).

 Although the invention as depicted in Figure 1 includes a first seat cushion
25 section 101 and a second seat cushion section 102, in alternate aspects the invention may include more than two discrete seat cushion sections, including for example a third seat cushion section (not shown) and a fourth seat cushion section (not shown).

As depicted in Figure 1, first seat cushion section 101 includes handle 104 and non-linear first border 105. Similarly, second seat cushion section 102 includes handle 106 and non-linear second border 107. In additional alternate aspects of the invention, only one of the plurality of seat cushion sections includes a handle.

Handle 104 and handle 106 are formed by removing a section of cushioning material near one border of the seat cushion sections. These handle sections may of any shape, and are intended to assist a user in manipulating the seat cushion sections when configured as either a novelty device or a seat cushion.

Handles 104 and 106 are molded to include ergonomic hand grips, although in alternate aspects of the present invention the handles are not molded in this fashion. Handles 104 and 106 have the same general shape and size.

The shape of the first seat cushion section 101 and second seat cushion section 102 are respectively defined by the design of their borders around their perimeters, including first border 105 and second border 107. Specifically, the pattern of the borders, including first border 105 and second border 107, are chosen based upon the desired shape of the novelty device. In this regard, first border 105 and second border 107 are formed such that first seat cushion section 101 and second seat cushion section 102 are shaped in a particular manner, such that first seat cushion section 101 and second seat cushion section 102 can be used as novelty devices.

First seat cushion section 101 and second seat cushion section 102 tessellate at an interface between non-linear first border 105 and non-linear second border 107, such that the plurality of seat cushion sections fit together at a border along a perimeter like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, with no gap in between.

In the embodiment of the invention depicted in Figure 1, first border 105 and second border 107 are zigzag shaped. The zigzag pattern of first border 105 tessellates with the zigzag pattern of second border 107, such that there is no gap between first border 105 and second border 107 if first border 105 and second border 107 were pressed together. The triangular shapes forming the zigzag

pattern can be congruent, as depicted in Figure 1, or incongruent. The zigzag pattern can be used to create a novelty device resembling fangs or sharp teeth, a lightning bolt, meshed gears, or any number of other intricate or ornate designs.

5 In additional aspects of the invention, first border 105 and second border 107 include a curved section or pattern. A curved pattern can be used to create a novelty device resembling a mascot, item of sports equipment such as a baseball bat, a musical instrument, jigsaw puzzle pieces, a hand shape, et cetera.

Each seat cushion section, on its own, takes on a desired shape based upon the design on the seat cushion section's borders, and hence may be used as a
10 novelty device. As such, the multi-sectional novelty device seat cushion includes at least two seat separate cushion sections, and thus two separate novelty devices. As such, the fan configuring the multi-section novelty device seat cushion as a novelty device is not limited to simply merely waving or displaying a once-piece novelty device to others, but may also interact each of the seat cushion sections
15 with each other, for additional enjoyment.

As an example of the operation of the invention, the novelty device, as depicted in Figure 1, may take on the shape of the upper and lower teeth profile of a carnivorous animal, such as a shark. A fan cheering with the multi-device novelty device seat cushion in this configuration can, along with other spectators,
20 move each of the seat cushion sections in an up-and-down motion, toward and away from the opposing seat cushion section so as to simulate the jaws of a carnivorous animal chewing. This type of cheer would be particularly enjoyable by fans of a number of professional sports teams named after ferocious animals, such as the San Jose Sharks[®], Florida Panthers[®], Jacksonville Jaguars[®], Detroit
25 Lions[®], Cincinnati Bengals[®], Carolina Panthers[®], Detroit Tigers[®], Minnesota Timberwolves[®], the Phoenix Coyotes[®], Chicago Cubs[®], Chicago Bears[®], Vancouver Grizzlies[®], Boston Bruins[®], Auburn Tigers[®], Louisiana State Tigers[®], UCLA Bruins[®], Washington Huskies[®], Washington State Cougars[®], California Golden Bears[®], and Arizona Wildcats[®]. It also may be enjoyable at some musical
30 events. Seat cushion sections may be silk-screened or otherwise manufactured in

such a way as to display team or performers names, advertisements, messages, or other designs upon their surfaces, such as text 108.

In further, alternate aspects of the invention, only one seat cushion section of the plurality of seat cushion sections is designed to be a novelty device.

5 Attaching mechanism 109 is affixed to first seat cushion section 101 at first border 105. Attaching mechanism 109 is used to affix first seat cushion section 101 to second seat cushion section 102, and could be a hook and loop fastener such as Velcro[®], a fabric tie, a temporary adhesive, a snap, a zipper, or any number of other attaching mechanisms. As is necessary, such as in the case
10 of a zipper or Velcro[®], in further aspects of the invention second seat cushion section 102 includes attaching mechanism 110, which mates with attaching mechanism 109 on first seat cushion section 101, to affix the seat cushion sections together.

 Since the invention as depicted in Figure 1 includes a two seat cushion
15 sections, only two attaching mechanisms are shown. It is understood that the invention contemplates more than two discrete seat cushion sections, and thus more than two attaching mechanisms for attaching each discrete seat cushion section to contiguous sections.

 As stated above, since each seat cushion section includes at least one non-
20 linear border, each seat cushion section can be designed such that it can be used as a novelty device. It is desired that each seat cushion section will be designed to resemble objects such as team mascots, and used by a fan to participate in cheering. It is also desired that multiple seat cushion sections will be designed with a common theme in mind, such as the foregoing example of two sets of sharp
25 teeth, such that fans will interact both seat cushions with each other, resulting in more sophisticated or inventive cheers.

 First seat cushion section 101 also includes storage compartment 111. Storage compartment 111 is a hollow portion of first seat cushion section 101 which allows a fan to store objects such as a flashlight, noisemaker, radio,
30 portable television, camera, microphone, recording devices, MP3 or other audio

player, portable game machine, video camera, et cetera, within first seat cushion section 101. The shape of storage compartment 111 can be fitted to the measurements of a particular device, or can be of an arbitrary shape.

5 In additional aspects of the invention, at least one of the plurality of seat cushion sections in addition to first seat cushion section 101 includes a storage compartment also. In further additional aspects of the invention, first seat cushion section does not include a storage compartment.

10 Since spectators at events often carry numerous bulky items, such as the items listed above, storage compartment 111 aids the spectator by providing additional storage space to carry additional items within an item the spectator is already planning to carry. Since the multi-sectional novelty device seat cushion already successfully combines both a novelty device and a seat cushion into one easy-to-carry unit, the addition of a storage compartment to one of the seat cushion sections further improves the flexibility of the invention, and significantly
15 aids the user of the invention.

When a spectator is not cheering, the device according to present invention can be configured as a seat cushion. Specifically, the spectator can take each seat cushion section, and align the non-linear borders of each seat cushion section such that the non-linear borders tessellate. The seat cushion sections can
20 be affixed together with the attaching mechanism, to form a seat cushion.

As illustrated in Figure 2, first seat cushion section 101 can be affixed to second seat cushion section 102 by aligning first border 105 with second border 107, and joining attaching mechanism 109 to attaching mechanism 110.

25 When the first seat cushion section 101 and the second seat cushion section 102 are joined together at an interface between the first border 105 and the second border 107, the multi-sectional novelty device seat cushion in rectangular-shaped, and fits on a standard-sized stadium seat. In additional aspects of the invention, the multi-sectional novelty device seat cushion is square-shaped. In further, additional aspects of the invention, the multi-sectional novelty device seat

cushion measures 14 inches by 14 inches. In an alternate aspect of the invention, the multi-sectional novelty device seat cushion is circular shaped.

The multi-sectional novelty device seat cushion 100 may be configured as a novelty device or a seat cushion, as described above. As shown in Figure 3, however, the same multi-sectional novelty device seat cushion 100 can also be optionally configured in an travel mode, in order to assist the user of the device in carrying the device into the stadium. Since use of the multi-sectional novelty device seat cushion 100 is largely predicated on travel to an venue such as a stadium, hall, amphitheater, or bleachers, it is important that the multi-sectional novelty device seat cushion travels well, and is convenient for the user to carry and store, when not in use as either a seat cushion or a novelty device. Of particular importance, the plurality of seat cushion sections should be transportable as one unit, and stored together in such a manner that none of the plurality of seat cushion sections becomes separated from the rest.

In Figure 3, handle 106 and handle 104 (not shown) are aligned so that carrying strap 312 can be inserted through them, and the multi-sectional novelty device seat cushion 100 can be conveniently carried as one unit. Since handle 104 and handle 106 are aligned multi-sectional novelty device seat cushion 100 can also be carried by a user by inserting their hand through both handles at once, and carrying the multi-sectional novelty device seat cushion 100 like a briefcase.

The present invention is also directed to a method of manufacturing a multi-sectional novelty device seat cushion. The method of manufacturing a multi-sectional novelty device seat cushion includes the steps of forming a plurality of seat cushion sections, including at least a first seat cushion section and a second seat cushion section, and affixing an attaching medium to a non-linear first border of the first seat cushion section. The first border of the first seat cushion section tessellates with a non-linear second border of the second seat cushion section. Figure 4 is a flowchart depicting the method of manufacturing a multi-sectional novelty device seat cushion, in accordance with the present invention.

The multi-sectional novelty device seat cushion is manufactured by forming a first seat cushion section (step S400). The first seat cushion section is formed separately from any other seat cushion section, and is cut or trimmed from a large piece of seat cushioning material, or blank, into a desired shape.

5 The manufacture of cushioning material, such as FPF, is well known in the art. See, for example, *Information About FPF For Cushioning Applications*, Polyurethane Foam Association, at <http://www.pfa.org> (last visited January 14, 2004).

10 The first seat cushion section includes a non-linear first border, which defines the shape of the first seat cushion section. The pattern of the first border is chosen based upon the desired shape of the novelty device. In this regard, the first border is formed such that first seat cushion section can be used as a novelty device.

15 Step S400 is also used to form an additional seat cushion sections, such as the second seat cushion section. Additional seat cushion sections are also formed from a larger seat cushion blank, and cut into a desired shape.

20 The second seat cushion section in particular also includes a non-linear second border, which tessellates with the non-linear first border of the first seat cushion section, such that the seat cushion sections fit together at a border along a perimeter like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, with no gap in between.

As such, the first border and second border are formed such that the first seat cushion section and the second seat cushion sections are shaped in a particular manner, such that the first seat cushion section and the second seat cushion section can be used, together or separately, as novelty devices.

25 As an example, the non-linear first border and second border can be zigzag shaped, in order to resemble fangs or sharp teeth, a lightning bolt, meshed gears, or other design. Alternatively, first border and second border can include a curved section, so as to resemble a mascot, item of sports equipment such as a baseball bat, a musical instrument, or jigsaw puzzle pieces.

As stated above, since each seat cushion section includes at least one non-linear border, each seat cushion section is designed such that it can be used as a novelty device. It is desired that each seat cushion section will be designed to resemble objects such as team mascots, and used by a fan to participate in cheering. It is also desired that multiple seat cushion sections will be designed with a common theme in mind, such as the foregoing example of two sets of sharp teeth, such that fans will interact both seat cushions with each other, resulting in more sophisticated or inventive cheers.

In an alternate aspect of the invention, the first seat cushion section and the additional seat cushion sections are produced using a mold, and are not cut or trimmed into shape.

In a further alternate aspect of the invention, the first seat cushion section and additional seat cushion sections are cut from a single, large piece of cushioning material. Since borders of the first seat cushion section and the second seat cushion section tessellate along a common, non-linear border, manufacturing multiple seat cushion sections from one large piece of cushioning material in this manner may reduce the amount of excess cushioning material that must be trimmed or cut away.

A determination is made as to whether handles will be formed in the seat cushions section (step S405). Handles are formed in both the first seat cushion section and the second seat cushion section. In an additional alternate aspect of the invention, however, handles are formed in each of the plurality of seat cushion sections. In a further additional aspect of the invention, handles are formed into the first seat cushion section only. If handles are to be formed, processing proceeds to step S410. If no handles are to be formed, processing proceeds to step S415.

Handles are formed in the seat cushion section (step S410). The handles are formed by removing a section of cushioning material near one border of the seat cushion section. These handle section may of any shape, and is intended to assist a user in manipulating the seat cushion section when configured as either a

novelty device or a seat cushion. The handle is molded to include an ergonomic hand grip, although in alternate aspects of the present invention the handle is not molded in this fashion. Handles of each of the plurality of seat cushion sections which have handles are of the same general shape and size.

5 In an alternate aspect of the invention, described above, the handles are formed using a mold.

A determination is made as to whether an attaching mechanism will be affixed to the seat cushion section (step S415). If an attaching mechanism is to be attached, processing proceeds to step S425, but if no attaching mechanism is to be
10 attached, processing proceeds to step S430.

An attaching mechanism is affixed to the first border and the second border (step S425). The attaching mechanism is affixed to first seat cushion section at the first border, and to the second seat cushion section at the second border. The attaching mechanism is used to affix the first seat cushion section to
15 the second seat cushion section, and could be a hook and loop fastener such as Velcro[®], a fabric tie, a temporary adhesive, a snap, a zipper, or any number of other attaching mechanisms.

In further aspects of the invention, where the attaching mechanism is a temporary adhesive, for example, or in an instance where the attaching
20 mechanism can operate without mating to a second attaching mechanism, the attaching mechanism is affixed to the first seat cushion section only.

It is understood that the invention contemplates more than two discrete seat cushion sections, and thus more than two attaching mechanisms for attaching each discrete seat cushion section to contiguous sections.

25 A decision is made as to whether to form a storage compartment into the seat cushion section (step S430). If a storage compartment is to be formed, processing proceeds to step S435, but if no storage compartment is to formed, processing proceeds to step S440.

The storage compartment is a hollow portion of a seat cushion section
30 which allows a fan to store objects such as a flashlight, noisemaker, radio,

portable television, camera, microphone, recording devices, MP3 or other audio player, portable game machine, video camera, et cetera, within the seat cushion section. The shape of the storage compartment can be fitted to the measurements of a particular device, or can be of an arbitrary shape.

5 If a storage compartment is to be formed, the storage compartment is formed by removing a section of cushioning material along one border of the seat cushion section (step S440). In the alternate aspect of the invention, as described above, the storage compartment is formed using the mold.

10 In additional aspects of the invention, at least one of the plurality of seat cushion sections in addition to first seat cushion section includes a storage compartment. In further additional aspects of the invention, first seat cushion section does not include a storage compartment.

15 Since spectators at outdoor events often carry numerous bulky items, such as the items listed above, the storage compartment aids the spectator by providing additional storage space to carry additional items within an item the spectator is already planning to carry. Since the multi-sectional novelty device seat cushion already successfully combines both a novelty device and a seat cushion into one easy-to-carry unit, the addition of a storage compartment to one of the seat cushion sections further improves the flexibility of the invention, and significantly
20 aids the user of the invention.

 A decision is made whether to decorate one of the plurality of seat cushion sections with a design or text (step S440). If decorating is to be performed, processing proceeds to step S450, but if decorating is not to be performed, processing proceeds to step S455.

25 Seat cushion sections may be silk-screened or otherwise manufactured in such a way as to display team or performers names, advertisements, messages, or other designs upon their surfaces. Decoration of cushion-type novelty devices is typically performed using a silk-screen process, although other methods such as dying or painting, or trimming or shaving designs or text out of the seating
30 surface are also possible.

After the seat cushion section is decorated, a decision is made as to whether additional seat cushion sections are to be formed (step S455). At least two seat cushion sections must be formed. If another seat cushion section is to be formed, processing proceeds to step S400, as described above. If no more seat cushion sections are to be produced, processing ends (step S460).

Although the present invention is described in terms of a multi-sectional novelty device seat cushion with two discrete seat cushion sections, multiple other seat cushion sections can also be formed, including for example a third seat cushion section or a fourth seat cushion section.

10 While the present invention has been described in terms of the preferred embodiments, those skilled in the art would understand that the invention could be modified from the preferred embodiment but still operate within the breadth and scope of the invention as described herein.